



Staying Safe During a Storm: What You Need to Know

Summer is known for hot days, warm breezes and beach vacations. Unfortunately, summer can also be a time of severe and dangerous storms. You've probably heard about the recent weather-related tragedies in Oklahoma, but did you also know there have already been six lightning fatalities in the United States in 2013? All of the deaths occurred in April and May and in each instance the person was outside during the storm.¹

While the tragic widespread property damage and loss of life following tornadoes and hurricanes are often well documented in the news, many individuals are unaware of the potentially serious impact of smaller, everyday storms. Preparedness is critical to keeping yourself and your family safe.

What are the risks?

It may seem that the risk of injury from a severe storm is limited to those who live in areas prone to tornadoes or hurricanes, but just because you do not live in "Tornado Alley" or along the coast does not mean you should not be prepared. There are 1,800 thunderstorms occurring at any given moment around the world. That means there is an average of 16 million thunderstorms per year, and 100,000 of them occur here in the United States.² Any storm can quickly become dangerous as a result of²:

- **Lightning.** Lightning occurs with every thunderstorm and is one of the top three storm-related killers in the United States.
- **Tornadoes.** In addition to being associated with thunderstorms, tornadoes can also accompany hurricanes and tropical storms as they reach land.
- **Strong wind.** Straight-line winds can reach 125 miles per hour and cause as much damage as tornadoes.
- **Hail.** Hail can cause devastating crop and property damage.
- **Flash floods.** Floods are the number one cause of death associated with thunderstorms.

Tips for being prepared and staying safe

While every situation is different, there are some basic tips you can follow to remain safe in most storm situations

Before and leading up to a storm^{2,3}:

- Develop a [family communication and disaster plan](#).



- Create an easily accessible [emergency supply kit](#). You should have enough supplies to last you a minimum of three days.
- Understand your local emergency plans for shelter and evacuation, and know how to [get alerts for your area](#).
- Remove debris and unsecured items from your lawn/deck and remove any dead or dying branches from trees and shrubs.
- Turn your refrigerator and freezer to the coldest settings and avoid opening the doors.

During a storm^{2,4}:

- There is no safe place outside during a storm; get indoors as quickly as possible. Move to a basement, underground shelter or interior windowless room if there is a threat of a tornado or high winds.
- If you lose power, check the temperature of your food before consuming. An unopened fridge will keep food cold for about four hours; a full, unopened freezer will maintain its temperature for approximately 48 hours.
- Know what to do if there is a [power outage](#) to minimize food loss and stay as comfortable as possible.
- Use a battery-powered radio or fully charged cell phone to stay updated on storm conditions. Your local weather resource may have a mobile app to provide the latest information throughout the storm.
- If there is lightning, avoid showering, taking a bath or using the plumbing as lightning can flow through tubs and showers.⁵

After a storm^{2,3}:

- Do not drive through flood water. More than half of all flood-related drownings occur when someone drives a vehicle into flood water.
- Do not let children play in flood water. It only takes six inches of moving water to knock an adult off their feet – children are even more susceptible.
- Be alert for and avoid downed power lines and notify the local utility company if you spot any.
- Take pictures of damage to personal property for insurance purposes.
- Wear sturdy shoes and protective clothing when examining damage to avoid injury.
- Contact your loved ones to let them know you are safe. Text messaging may be the best option for communication as texts can frequently get around disruptions in the communications network easier than phone calls.⁶

Want more information?

An emergency can happen at any time and often without notice. Learn more about how to be prepared by checking out the following resources:



- Visit [Military OneSource](#) for disaster resources and products.
 - Go to [Ready Navy](#) for information on how to stay informed, build an emergency kit and make an effective disaster plan.
 - Explore the [Federal Emergency Management Agency](#) (FEMA) website for extensive information on what to do before, during and after an emergency.
 - Log in to the [Navy Family Accountability and Assessment System](#) (NFAAS) to update your personal information and muster during an active event. NFAAS also offers preparedness tips and contact information for the 24-hour emergency call center.
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1. National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration. Lightning Safety. <http://www.lightningsafety.noaa.gov/fatalities.htm>. Updated June 2013. Accessed June 6, 2013.
 2. National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration. Thunderstorms, tornadoes, lightning...nature's most violent storms. <http://www.nws.noaa.gov/om/severeweather/resources/ttl6-10.pdf>. Accessed June 5, 2013.
 3. Federal Emergency Management Association. Natural Disasters. <http://www.ready.gov/natural-disasters>. Updated February 11, 2013. Accessed June 5, 2013.
 4. American Red Cross. Be Red Cross ready: Power outage checklist. http://www.redcross.org/images/MEDIA_CustomProductCatalog/m4340121_PowerOutage.pdf. Published 2009. Accessed June 6, 2013.
 5. New York State Department of Health. Lightning Safety Tips. <http://www.health.ny.gov/environmental/emergency/weather/lightning/>. Updated May 2013. Accessed June 7, 2013.
 6. Federal Emergency Management Association. Family Communications. <http://www.ready.gov/family-communications>. Updated February 12, 2013. Accessed June 7, 2013.



Disaster Preparedness Kit¹

Cooler
Ice
Digital thermometer (to check internal food temps)
Water – the American Red Cross recommends one gallon per person, per day
Non-perishable food that is easy to prepare
Manual can opener
Flashlight
Batteries
Battery-powered radio
One week's supply of medications
First aid kit
Cell phone and charger
Cash
Fire extinguisher
Baby formula and food
Pet food and water

1. American Red Cross. Be Red Cross ready: Power outage checklist.
http://www.redcross.org/images/MEDIA_CustomProductCatalog/m4340121_PowerOutage.pdf. Published 2009. Accessed June 6, 2013.